

# GREENWorks

## Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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### Checklist for the Beach: Sunglasses, Sunscreen, and NHDES?



Before you hit the beach this summer, you might want to first hit the web. NHDES water and air quality programs have many resources to help you determine whether it's a safe day to head to the beach for fun in the sun. Before you dust off the beach chairs and pack up the car, use this checklist as a guideline for a great beach day.

- ✓ **How's the beach water quality today?** – The NHDES Beach Inspection Program web page lists warnings or advisories for New Hampshire public beaches on lakes and at the ocean. NHDES tests the water at 16 coastal beaches from Memorial Day to Labor Day once or twice a week for elevated levels of fecal bacteria. Additionally, 170 freshwater beaches are sampled monthly for fecal bacteria and cyanobacteria. Visit the Beach Inspection Program web page:  
[http://www2.des.state.nh.us/WaterShed\\_BeachMaps/WaterShed\\_BeachMaps.aspx](http://www2.des.state.nh.us/WaterShed_BeachMaps/WaterShed_BeachMaps.aspx) .They also post daily update to their twitter feed during beach season. You can follow them at:  
[https://twitter.com/NHDES\\_Beaches](https://twitter.com/NHDES_Beaches)
- ✓ **How about the air quality?** - When you are planning a beach day, it is important to not only consider the quality of the water but also the air. Don't forget to check out the NHDES Air Quality Forecast webpage: <http://www2.des.state.nh.us/airdata/>, which allows you to see the air quality throughout New Hampshire.
- ✓ **Are there any warnings for cyanobacteria?** - Cyanobacteria are bacteria that photosynthesize. Many species of cyanobacteria grow in colonies to form surface water "blooms." Blooms are usually blue-green in color and consist of thousands of individual cells. Although cyanobacteria are a natural phenomenon on NH lakes, blooms of cyanobacteria may poses a danger to humans and animals alike. Contact can cause

adverse health effects like nausea, skin irritations and mild fever. NHDES makes it easy to avoid cyanobacteria blooms by posting cyanobacteria lake warning and beach advisories on their Beach Inspection Program Current Advisories page.

If you have checked off all of the boxes in the beach checklist above, you should be ready for a great day at the beach! However, it is always a good idea before you go into the water to look for any advisory signs that may be posted at the beach. If you see a green NHDES sign posted, it means that the bacteria levels in the water are not elevated above the state bacteria standards. A yellow NHDES sign indicates that contact with the water is not recommended by NHDES because the bacteria levels in the water have exceeded levels above the state standards. If you see a red NHDES sign it indicates that there are elevated levels of cyanobacteria in the water.

You wouldn't forget to pack your sunscreen, towels and sunglasses before heading to the beach this summer, so why forget to use NHDES resources to check beach water and air quality before you go? NHDES has made it easy to find the most important information on your favorite NH beaches so that you can enjoy your summer beach day without worry of potential health risks to you or your family.

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